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OBSERVATIONS OF 32 YEARS OF CLUB WORK

Broadcast by J. A. Evans, Administrative Assistant, Georgia Extension Service, May 6, 1939, in the 4-H Club program, Nation Farm and Home Hour.

--ooOoo--

Not long ago I was present when the 7th community center in a Georgia county was being dedicated. A 4-H club girl presided -- a choir of club boys and girls sang. All the families of the community were gathered there, many of whom though residing but a few miles apart, met them for the first time. Community consciousness and activity were being reborn.

I spent the night at the home of a young couple who were the leading spirits in the movement. It developed both were former 4-H club members. Their story was inspiring. Each had had jobs in the city when the depression came -- wages were cut -- one position was discontinued and the young couple decided to return to the land. Securing a few abandoned but fertile acres and a cow or two, just a few years ago they made the start. They now own a small but good herd of dairy cattle and a modern dairy plant. They have built a modern cottage and are relatively prosperous and independent. Almost everything had been from the start the work of their own hands. Both worked, in every phase of the business. The dairy barn and equipment, as well as the modern cottage home were almost entirely built by the husband's own labor. Both gave credit to their 4-H club training as helping them to achieve success. When I reflected that more than a million boys and girls are each year receiving the same kind of training and I came away from that home and that community with a new born confidence in the future of our nation.

Back -- some 30 years ago, when extension work through all this time has been with adults -- but I've had an opportunity to see 4-H Club work grow each year since it started.

And I believe nobody will contradict me when I say that work with boys and girls was started only when we found that we could teach father and mother best -- if we started with the boys and girls. I recall one instance that happened in Texas in 1907. Tom Marks was county agricultural agent in one county -- and incidentally, he's still engaged in extension work in Oklahoma. As county agent, he promoted a corn show, to demonstrate better corn and better methods of raising it. The show was a failure; it brought only three entries, and only 20 farmers came to see it. Someone made the remark -- "You can't teach an old dog new tricks." So Tom said, "Then next year we'll try the pups." The next year he enrolled 300 boys as co-operators in a corn growing demonstration -- and his corn show that fall drew an attendance of more than 2000 people, including state and national officials of the demonstration work.

Uncle Tom Marks believes -- and so do I -- that the success of this project with boys caused Dr. Knapp to let his agents encourage more boys and girls to become cooperators in demonstration work.

Corn clubs for the boys brought information about better farm practices to the farm; tomato clubs for the girls brought demonstration work into the farm home.

(over)

I hope you young folks will let a man who has lived three-quarters of a century give you an idea or two about your own organization -- your 4-H club. Whether you realize it or not, you're not only picking up a lot of practical information, but you're making that information usable, by putting it to work in your home, on the farm, through your projects. I think that's one big advantage that 4-H Club work has over other types of education -- it makes knowledge usable.

And many of you have been fortunate enough to make money. Not a great deal, perhaps, but your 4-H Club projects have helped you to become independent in some things; so you don't have to turn to Mother or Dad every time you need a dime or a quarter. I think the earlier a boy or girl learns to stand on his own feet, the better it is for him.

In your 4-H Club work you're learning how to get along and work with other people -- and you're learning many other things that good citizens need to know. I'm happy to have been close enough to watch 4-H Club work, and see all that it has done for the seven million boys and girls who have been club members. I'm proud of the good citizens that 4-H Club work has produced.

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